

**GOD'S ANTIDOTE TO WORRY**  
**Stressbusters - Part 1**  
**Rick Warren**

Psalm 23

**The Problem with Worry**

It's Unhelpful

It's Unreasonable

It's Unhealthy

The Antidote

**Believe God** \_\_\_\_\_

"The Lord is my shepherd; I have everything I need." Ps. 23:1

What Does A Shepherd Do?

- He \_\_\_\_\_
- He \_\_\_\_\_
- He \_\_\_\_\_
- He \_\_\_\_\_

"God takes care of his people like a shepherd" Isa. 40:11 (NCV)

"My God will meet all your needs  
according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." Phil 4:19

**How Can I Let God Be My Shepherd?**

**Accept** \_\_\_\_\_

"The Lord is my shepherd" Ps. 23:1

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd... my sheep know me... they listen to my voice, and they follow me."  
John 10:14, 27

Who is in control of your life?  
*"Playing God"* is the root of worry

### **Begin**

---

"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything; tell God your needs... If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand."  
Phil 4:6-7 (LB)

"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." I Peter 5:7

### **Consider**

---

"So don't be anxious about tomorrow, God will take care of your tomorrow too. Live one day at a time."  
Matt. 6:34 (LB)

"Give us today our daily bread." Matt. 6:11

"Your heavenly Father already knows perfectly well what you need, and he will give them to you if you give him first place in your life and live as he wants you to." Matt. 6:32-33 (LB)

**GOD'S ANTIDOTE TO WORRY**  
**Stressbusters -Part 1**  
**Rick Warren**

We begin a new series I'm calling Stressbusters. We're going to look at the seven greatest sources of stress. They are all found in Psalm 23. And the antidotes are also found in Psalm 23. Psalm 23 is the most beloved psalm of the Bible. And it tells us what God is really like. It's a picture of God. My goal for the next six weeks is when we get through with the series you'll know what God is like and you'll know how much He really loves you and how much you matter to Him. The more you understand God, the easier it is to trust Him.

The first cause of stress we'll look at is Worry. We all have pet worries: finances, jobs, relationships, marriage, kids, health... There are three problems with worry. Worry is unhelpful, it's unreasonable and it's unhealthy.

It's unhelpful because it never accomplishes anything, it never solves anything. It is stewing without doing. It's like racing your car engine -- you create a lot of smoke and noise but you don't go anywhere. Worry has never solved a problem. Worry cannot change the past if you worry about it. Worry cannot control the future. It only makes us miserable today. It's unhelpful, it doesn't work.

It is unreasonable. It exaggerates your problems, makes mountains out of molehills. It just makes problems seem bigger and bigger. The more you review something when you're worried about it, the bigger it gets. To worry about something you can't change is useless. To worry about something you can change is stupid -- change it. Either way, *don't worry!*

It is unhealthy. The body was not made to worry; it's unnatural. When you worry you get ulcers, backaches, headaches, insomnia. Our bodies were not made to worry. Plants and animals don't worry. The only thing that worries in all God's creation is people. We worry and we weren't made to worry. It makes us unhappy and unhealthy. The old English word for worry is the word "to strangle" or "to choke". That's what worry does -- it strangles the life out of you. But it's not natural.

You weren't born worrying. You have to learn to worry. You have to practice to be good at it. The good news is that if worry is learned it can also be unlearned.

**WHAT IS THE ANTIDOTE TO WORRY?**

**BELIEVE GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF ME**

Ps. 23:1 "The Lord is my shepherd; I have everything I need." If I believe that God is going to take care of me, I'm not going to worry. How does making God my shepherd show the antidote to stress in my life? If I let the Lord be my Shepherd how is that an antidote to worry? You have to know what shepherds do.

1. A shepherd *provides*. He provides food, shelter, the basic necessities for his sheep.
2. A shepherd *protects*. He defends against enemies, harm.
3. A shepherd *guides*. He leads sheep when they're confused and don't know which way to go.
4. A shepherd *corrects*. Any problem that comes along, he corrects it.

The amazing thing is this: God has promised to do these four things in your life if you'll trust Him, if you'll let Him be your shepherd. He says "I'll provide for you. I will protect you. I will guide you. I will correct the problems in your life for you. If you will let Me be your Shepherd."

Isaiah 40:11 "God takes care of his people like a shepherd." God says, I'll take care of you, I'll guide, protect, correct. I will help you, if you'll let me be your shepherd.

He even gets more specific in Phil. 4:19 "My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." This doesn't say, God will meet all of your greed. There's a difference between needs and wants. If God met all of your wants you'd be the biggest spoiled brat in the universe. You'd be spoiled and self-centered. He's not going to give you everything you want. It would be like the Midas touch. Soon you'd be miserable. But He has said, "I will meet all of your needs."

God says "I will...". He doesn't say, I might, I'll think about it, possibly. He says I will. That means God's character is on the line. He's either going to do it or He's a liar. When God makes a promise His character is on the line. He's either got to do what He says or He's a liar.

God says "I will meet all ..." What does "all" include? Doctor payments? Mortgage payments? Spiritual needs? Financial needs? Health needs? Relational needs? Yes. Everything. If God has promised to provide all of your needs, to protect you, to guide you when you're confused, and to correct the problems in your life, what does that leave left to worry about? Nothing.

When you have an insurance policy, once you know what's covered in that policy, you don't worry about it anymore. If something happens, whatever is covered, you don't worry about it. In the Bible are over 7,000 promises -- the coverage God puts on your life. When you understand them, what is left to worry about?

Worry is not only unhelpful, unreasonable, unhealthy -- it's unnecessary if Jesus Christ is your Shepherd. Any time you worry you're acting like an atheist. In essence you are saying: God is not going to keep His promises; God's not going to take care of my needs. If it's to be, it's up to me. You're acting like an atheist every time you worry. Worry is simply practical atheism. It says, I don't believe God will do what He says He will do.

### **How Do I Make God My Shepherd?**

God is not the Shepherd of everybody. He's only the Shepherd of those who let Him be the Shepherd.

### **Accept Jesus as my Lord**

"The Lord is my Shepherd." -- The Lord can't be your Shepherd until the Shepherd is your Lord. The two go together. You can't ask Him to be the Shepherd without allowing Him to be your Lord. I have to stop playing God and let God be God.

What does it mean to be Lord? It means to be in control. Lord simply means whoever is in charge. Today we might say boss, manager, CEO, chairman of the board. Lord means under control, the person who is on top, in control, calling the shots.

Jesus Christ is Lord in your life if He's calling the shots in your life. If He's not calling the shots, He's not Lord. And if He's not Lord, He's not Shepherd. Because the Lord is my Shepherd.

To accept Jesus as Lord means three things. John 10:14, 27 "Jesus said, 'I am the good shepherd... my sheep know me ... they listen to my voice, and they follow me.'" These three words is what it means to have Jesus as Lord: You *know* Jesus, you *listen* to Jesus, you *follow* Jesus. You put Him in control.

All the worry that you're worrying about -- whatever it is -- worry is the control issue. The root behind all of your worry is a fear that you are not in control. Worry is always an attempt to control the uncontrollable. Worry is assuming responsibility God never meant for you to have. Whenever you try to control the uncontrollable (kids, U.S., economy, environment...) you're going to worry. Worry is a warning light. Whenever you start to worry the light should go off: Warning!-- you're trying to control too much. That is the root behind all worry. Everytime you start to worry, you're trying to control something that you shouldn't be trying to control in the first place.

Who's in control of your life? God gives you the option. He doesn't force Himself on anybody's life. You have two options -- either you can be in control of your life or you can let God be in control of your life. God doesn't co-pilot. You'd crash and He'd get blamed. God is not going to force it on you, but either you can be in control of your life or you can let Him be in control of your life. He made you. He knows what will make you happy more than you do. He has the power to bring those things to pass. But He's still going to give you the option.

If you are in control of your life you're playing God. Playing God is the root of worry. Every time you start playing God, you're going to worry. When you start trying to control things and make them work... and force yourself to try to control many things that are out of your control then inside there's a little voice that says "Who are you kidding? You know you're not God and you and God know that you don't have it all together." It's an issue of control.

If you're running your own life without God's direction, you ought to be worried. Most of the things in your life you can't control. Then you have every reason to worry.

But if God is running your life and He's your Lord and your Shepherd you know He can control anything so you don't sweat it. I make Jesus the Lord of my life.

### **Begin Praying About Everything**

Pray about all the stuff you usually worry about. Just talk to God. He wants your friendship, your relationship. You don't have time to pray? Do you have time to worry? If we prayed about all the things we worry about we would have an awfully lot less to worry about. Worry doesn't change anything; prayer does. Worry is stewing without doing. Prayer gets in touch with God who can change it. Whenever I'm worried I have two options -- I can panic or I can pray.

Phil. 4:6 "Don't worry about anything; instead pray about everything; tell God your needs... if you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand."

Everything. Don't just pray about religious things. Most people, when they pray, pray prayers they think God wants to hear. Pray about everything. If it's big enough to worry about, it's big enough to pray about. God's ability is greater than your anxiety.

"Cast all of your anxiety on him because he cares for you." I Peter 5:7

Cast means to unload, let it go. The Greek word literally means drop. Unload it. Prayer is an incredible stress reliever. All -- whatever you're stressed out about, upset about, irritated about. Cast it all on Him. Dump it on Him. Unload. The problem is, most of us do the casting like we do in fishing. We cast our worries out and then we real them back in.

Jim:

Last October, my life was in transition. We'd found a home that seemed too good to be true. Cheap, lots of land, all sorts of room for animals. We priced our house to sell quickly -- which it did -- but soon learned that the old adage was true: if something seems too good to be true, it probably is. The canyon home couldn't even pass the initial inspection. We suddenly found ourselves with our home sold, cheap, and without another comparable home to move into. We had two choices: either worry and fret or wait and trust. My father in law is an architect and he was encouraging us to find a lot and would help us build a home. We prayed and asked for God's guidance. Sunday, we came to church and guess what banner stressed across the stage: Time to build. I thought, Yes, God is giving us a sign -- literally. Within a month, we had bought some land. Eleven months later, here I am standing on stage in the building that God had in mind with that sign. Eleven months later the piece of property I own is still dirt. We've had eleven months of environmental impact reports, hydrological reports, endangered species acts, planning commission hearings and failed soil tests. In each of these it is our faith that has been tested. The earth crumbles around us but

God has been our rock. It's not that we haven't had stress, it's just that our faith enables us to believe that all things happen in God's timing. It has not been our time to build. We still don't know how it will turn out. By trusting God and not dwelling on our setbacks, we recognize God's hand through most of the experience. About two months ago I had a difficult decision. I learned I was about to lose one of my largest accounts and I had just failed a very expensive soil test for the second time. Money was going out and less would be coming in. When it came time to give my weekly offering and live up to my "Time to Build" commitment, I worried about it being the sensible thing to do. My heart was saying one thing and my head the other. The next week I got the "go ahead" on another job that I had been working on for quite some time. I had totally miscalculated the size. I soon realized it would pay me ten times the amount I had given in offering. Talk about a stress reliever! Just another confirmation to me that if I trust God instead of worrying, He assumes responsibility to take care of our needs. Matthew 6:32 "Your heavenly Father already knows perfectly well what are your needs and He will give them to you, if you give Him first place in your life and live as He wants you to." Besides trusting God, another source of stress relief is having fellowship with believers. Since we all experience the same worries, we can help each other during trying times at home and at work. During the past year my wife, Vicki, a close work friend and client, and the friends I have in my small group have all helped me when I've been tempted to worry. I pray that I will continue to seek out the right people -- you people -- who share my love for the Lord. An important antidote for worry to me: "For I know the plans I have for you, plans for good and not for evil, plans to give you a future and a hope." Jeremiah 29:12. I'm learning that when I focus on trusting God's plan in my life, hope pushes the worry out of my mind.

This week I had to fly to San Francisco but there was a fog all over the valley and much of Orange County. As I got into the plane, climbed up through the fog, it was bright and sunny on the other side. Worry is kind of like a dense fog sometimes. When it comes in, you can't see clearly. Have you ever tried to drive in a fog? You can't see what's ahead. It's an illusion. Worry is like that. Worry and fog create an illusion. The National Bureau of Standards has discovered if you took a dense fog that would cover seven square blocks of a city, 100 feet deep, and condense the fog it would only equal enough moisture to fill less than one glass of water. That's what worry does - It expands and exaggerates the problem.

There is a third thing you do if you want to deal with worry.

### **CONSIDER ONE DAY AT A TIME.**

Focus, concentrate and consider one day at a time. Matthew 6:34 "So don't be anxious about tomorrow. God will take care of your tomorrow too. Live one day at a time."

Jesus is saying, Don't open your umbrella until it starts raining. Today is the tomorrow that you worried about yesterday. When you worry you don't do anything about yesterday, you can't control tomorrow, you just mess up today. The future can seem overwhelming. Therefore, God has put it in little bite-size pieces. He just gives it to us in one little 24 hour increment at a time. Live one day at a time.

Matthew 6:11 "Give us today our daily bread." Overcoming worry is a day to day choice. There is no pill that will make you stop worrying. There is no seminar, tape, or book that will make you stop worrying. There is no one spiritual experience you can have and you will never worry again. Worry, and the antidote to it, is going to be a daily choice, sometimes hourly, sometimes moment by moment choice in which you say, Am I going to believe the Lord is my Shepherd or am I going to believe I am my own Lord? Who is in control of my life? Who's calling the shots? If I'm in control, I have a lot to worry about. But if God's in control, it's His problem and He can handle it.

Nancy:

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want". It was almost twelve years ago, my husband, Ricko and I were challenged with not only knowing this verse but living it. He had been diagnosed with cancer which had

destroyed his kidney and we found ourselves in the middle of doctor's appointments, therapy and dialysis treatments. The bottom fell out of our perfect little world and denial, depression, anger and worry reared their ugly faces. As we waited and prayed and with the support of our church family, our faithful Heavenly Father who loves us so much, strengthened us up for the battle ahead. For the next five years Ricko was unable to work and so our income, which was from him alone as I had chosen at that time to stay home with our children, was cut about forty percent. How would we manage? We worried and prayed for God's direction and provision. This time He took our worries and replaced them with time together with our children, time together in prayer, and a closeness we hadn't shared before. It was into Ricko's third or fourth year of his illness that insurance became so expensive that we couldn't afford to continue it. However, with the cost of his health care alone we couldn't afford to not have insurance. At that time, God led me to a job where the insurance company would pick up all coverage for my family starting three months from my hire date. This is generally unheard of with any pre-existing condition. But there it was and there we were in the arms of our Shepherd. Through five years of his illness we had seen God's miraculous provision for our family, not just for our needs but amazing for our wants also. When Ricko died in 1988, I found myself a widow without a career, a single parent with two almost teen-agers to raise, a home, a mortgage, doctor's bills, hospital bills and basically a monthly debt that my small bank job would not make. But worry again? Not me! I had learned to trust and wait! Ha! What in the world was I going to do? I remember thinking just that one day and then remembering back all the ways God had already shown to me and my family His care, including the comfort of His word, the peace in prayer, the support and council of Christian friends, and the healing of tears. So once again I found myself looking to God and waiting for Him to do something. I had seen His provision many, many times over but each time I was confronted with worry it was a decision to trust and let go, not something that automatically happened in me. I could go on and on from one trial to the next and tell you that each time I made the decision to let go and let God I experienced His promise to care for me. He has provided so abundantly for my children that I have been able to return to college to get my RN, I have a great job, and I have been able to keep our home and all the debts that go with it. Has it been easy? No. But has it been easier when I've let God take the worry and wait on Him? Yes. Things aren't perfect. We all go through trial after trial in our progression towards Christ's likeness. I'm daily faced with situations in my job, finances and kids where I can choose to worry and fret -- and sometimes I choose these. However, when I take the time to consider my options and remember how much easier life becomes when I choose trust and give it all to God. Today, I'm a phone call away from the best small group anybody could hope for. When worry wells up inside and I feel powerless over it all I need to do is call my small group and together we pray and support each other and then we set back and watch God take control. The worry goes away and is replaced with the peace and knowledge that God's best for my life is just ahead. Psalm 144:1-2 "Blest be the Lord, my strength, my goodness and my fortress, my high tower and my deliverer, my shield and He in whom in trust."

What's got you worried? What is it that causes you to fuss and fume, toss and turn, wondering "Is it ever going to work out?" What is it that when you think about it you get the pit in your stomach? I don't know what you're going through right now, but that doesn't matter. God does. God knows exactly what you're going through.

"Your heavenly Father already knows perfectly well what you need, and he will give them to you if you give him first place in your life and live as he wants you to."

Go home and read Ps. 23. You will find that seventeen times in six verses, the words "I", "my" or "me" are used. This is an intensely personal psalm. The word "You" -- talking about God -- is used five times, "He" or "His" is used about 7 or 10 times. This psalm is about a relationship to God. That's the antidote to your stress. Religion will not get rid of your stress. Religion will not help you stop worrying. You don't need religion. You need a relationship. You need a Shepherd -- somebody who provides, protects, guides and corrects. God says "That's what I made you for. I didn't make you for religion. I made you to know Me." He knows all about you, He wants you to know Him. That's why He sent Jesus Christ.

I invite you to take the first step by opening your life to Jesus Christ if you've never done so. Ask Jesus Christ to become your Lord -- your boss, manager -- and Shepherd, as He's promised to do.

Wilbur Chapman was asked to come cheer up a little 10 year old boy who was dying of cancer. He went to the home of the little boy. The little boy was worried about dying and Chapman said, "I want to teach you something. Let me have your hand. The Bible says, 'The Lord is my my Shepherd.' Everytime you start to get worried about what's going to happen to you, you think, 'The Lord is my Shepherd' and you hold onto your index finger." Two weeks later the little boy died in his sleep. The next morning his mother found him holding his index finger.

I don't know what you're worried about or stressed out about today, but I do know this: God loves you, He cares about your stress, and He can help you. "The Lord is my Shepherd". Emphasize different words -- "The Lord is my Shepherd" -- there is only one real Lord, all the others are fakes and imitations. "The Lord is my Shepherd" -- not might be, He will be, He always has been, He always will be. "The Lord is my Shepherd" -- Can you say that with certainty? Is the Lord your Shepherd? Is the Shepherd your Lord? He can't be one without the other. When you can say that and mean it, you're going to stop worrying. Don't carry that burden one more second. It's unnecessary.

"Jesus Christ, I don't understand it all, but I've seen that You've promised to take care of my needs if only I'll trust You. And I realize that worry is just a warning light that I'm trying to control everything. I don't want to do that any more. I want you to be in control of my life. I want You to be my manager. I want You to be my Lord. I want to know You. I want to listen to You. I want You to lead me in the life plan that You made me for. Amen"

